

IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 20, 1845

Submitted, and ordered to be printed.

Mr. WOODBRIDGE made the following

REPORT:

*The Committee on Public Lands, to which have been referred sundry petitions of citizens of Missouri, praying that the land districts of Fayette and Palmyra may be consolidated into one, and a land office therefor established at Bloomington, in said State, ask leave to report :*

That the policy of discontinuing the land offices of the United States, in districts in which the greater part of the public lands may have been disposed of, and of attaching that which remains to some other adjoining district or districts, is very manifest. The tendency of the land system, unless there were some continuing check to counteract it, would necessarily lead to an increase and retention of offices from time to time becoming useless. Such a check was therefore, and wisely, devised by Congress; and, by the act of the 12th of June, 1840, the Secretary of the Treasury was directed, by a rule therein prescribed, to discontinue all such offices within land districts, whenever the quantity of public land therein should be reduced to a number of acres less than one hundred thousand.

The policy of abolishing those offices not coming within the rule alluded to must depend upon a variety of circumstances, having relation to the quantity of public lands still remaining unsold in the land district, to the number of the population in the district, and to the topography of the country. The primary motive for the establishment of those offices undoubtedly is to expedite the sale of the public domain; a secondary motive is to furnish facilities, and accommodate the purchaser. It is deemed proper to have regard to all these circumstances and motives, in deciding upon the question referred to your committee. Those circumstances are not now sufficiently apparent, nor within the knowledge of your committee. That they may render expedient the consolidation of the two land districts, within a short period of time, your committee think highly probable. But the change contemplated ought not to be made suddenly, nor without a general view, at least, of all circumstances the consideration of which would be properly involved in the decision. The justice and applicability of these remarks seem admitted by the Commissioner of the General Land Office, as by his letter appended will appear.

Not doubting, then, the probability that, at another session of Congress, the measure proposed *may* be very expedient, your committee nevertheless are of the opinion that a definitive decision can hardly now be justified by any such information as is before them. They accordingly recommend that the further consideration of the petitions referred to them be indefinitely postponed.

REMARKS OF THE

COMMISSIONER OF THE LAND OFFICE

Mr. WOODWARD made the following

## REPORT:

The Committee on Public Lands to which have been referred sundry petitions of citizens of Missouri, praying that the land districts of Fayette and Buchanan may be consolidated into one, and which office therefore established at Bloomington, in said State, ask leave to report:

That the policy of discontinuing the land offices of the United States in districts in which the greater part of the public lands may have been disposed of, and of attaching that which remains to some other adjoining district or districts, is very manifest. The tendency of the land system, unless there were some controlling check to counteract it, would necessarily lead to an increase and retention of offices from time to time, and, of course, to a corresponding increase in the number of offices. Such a check was therefore, and wisely, devised by Congress; and by the act of the 13th of June, 1830, the Secretary of the Treasury was directed by a rule therein prescribed, to discontinue all such offices within land districts, whenever the quantity of public land therein should be reduced to a number of acres less than one hundred thousand.

The policy of abolishing those offices not coming within the rule above stated, must depend upon a variety of circumstances, having relation to the quantity of public lands still remaining unsold in the land district, to the number of the population in the district, and to the topography of the country. The primary motive for the establishment of these offices, and, secondarily, to expedite the sale of the public domain; a secondary motive is to furnish facilities, and accommodate the purchaser. It is deemed proper to have regard to all these circumstances and motives, in deciding upon the question referred to your committee. Those circumstances, also, not now sufficiently apparent, nor within the knowledge of your committee. That they may render expedient the consolidation of the two land districts within a short period of time, your committee think highly probable. But the change contemplated ought not to be made suddenly, nor without a general view, at least, of all circumstances the consideration of which would be properly involved in the decision. The justice and applicability of these remarks seem admitted by the Commissioner of the General Land Office as by his letter, forwarded will appear.